Your Union At Work: Waukegan Teachers Prevail in Grievance Arbitrations

by Michelle Standridge, IFT Field Service Director

One of the most important benefits of being in the Union is that, as a member, you enjoy a contract that is enforceable by law. If an employer violates the Collective Bargaining Agreement, your Union can process a grievance through a number of steps, eventually leading to binding arbitration if the dispute is not resolved at a lower step of the grievance process. Arbitration works in a similar fashion to a trial where both sides present evidence and an arbitrator, who is comparable to a judge, hears testimony regarding the case. The arbitrator will then render an opinion, either granting or denying the grievance and determining what, if any, remedy will make the grievant whole.

This recently occurred in the Waukegan Teachers’ Council. The Union and the Board were unable to resolve a grievance, so the Union took the grievance to arbitration and prevailed.

Last year, a full-time teacher at the high school was hired by committee as the most qualified candidate for the head football coach position. Four Board members, Anita Hanna, Tommy Rhyan, Victoria Torres and Cheri Pierson-White voted “no” on the appointment. This action was in violation of the language in the Collective Bargaining Agreement which allows the committee to hire the best-qualified candidate and, under the contract in effect at the time, gave preferential consideration to individuals within the teaching ranks of the school they are representing and then to qualified teachers within the District. These four Board members disregarded the contract language, and one Board member even testified in the arbitration proceedings as to his personal reasons for his vote, which indicated an understanding that he violated the contract and did so willingly. Ultimately, the arbitrator ruled in favor of the Union, specifying that there was a contract violation. He ruled that the teacher should have served as football coach for the 2014-2015 school year and was due full back pay for missed wages.

IFT PSRP/Public Employees Conference

Plan now to attend the IFT’s conference focused on the specific needs of PSRPs and Public Employees! Ask your Council President or see www.ift-aft.org for details.

October 23-24, 2015
The Dog Days...

As I write this the heat of August is in full swing. When I was in middle school, I first learned what the “Dog Days of Summer” meant to me. Like many teenagers of my era, I spent the summers cutting neighbors lawns for income. Usually, early August meant the onset of the lethargy that often accompanies hot, humid weather of Midwestern summers.

That “inertia against doing,” as I like to call it, seemed to develop during the “Dog Days.” Experiencing this “inertia against doing” is a lesson most young people learn. Overcoming this apathy presents an entirely different scenario.

This inertia is similar to what many of us in the Public Sector Union movement are experiencing. Our organizational efforts have suffered through enormous pressure for several years now from governors such as Scott Walker in Wisconsin who waged a wicked and mean spirited war against the right to collective bargaining. We courageously and vehemently fought for Walker’s recall as a governor, but unfortunately failed in that endeavor.

Now in Illinois, as a Union and profession, we are under attack by Governor Rauner who has already proven that he is of a similar, destructive philosophical view toward Teacher Unions as Walker.

The way to ultimately counteract the anti-Union movement is not new: we strengthen our cause by organizing member-to-member. As appealing as it may be to try and wage a battle with the anti-Union folks through the media, our battle will never be won in the court of public opinion for two simple reasons. First, the media is controlled by boards, owners, stockholders and editors. These folks are management and inherently don’t believe in strong Union rights. Why would they side with us? Second, you cost the public money…a.k.a. taxes. As an educator, you are highly respected in your community and your profession, for the most part, held in high esteem, but your salary and benefits may not be looked upon with such regard.

Look no further than the recent and ongoing attacks on the public pensions that you earned as deferred income or the fact that Wisconsin educators earn more than ten percent less under Walker’s tenure as Governor.

When you personally ask a colleague to join us, and then follow up with request for active involvement in your Union, you effectively and persuasively work to prevent the results traumatizing our colleagues in Wisconsin and elsewhere."

--LCFT President Mike McGue

“When you personally ask a colleague to join us, and then follow up with request for active involvement in your Union, you effectively and persuasively work to prevent the results traumatizing our colleagues in Wisconsin and elsewhere.”

Business Agents and Officers are ready and willing to assist each and every one of you in membership recruitment techniques and training.

Thanks to the solid efforts of both the American Federation of Teachers and the Illinois Federation of Teachers, we’ve established a mass-media presence to help counteract some of the anti-Union rhetoric spread by many misguided media sources. But in addition to providing the taxpayers

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Prairie Crossing Council Ratifies Four Year Agreement

by Michelle Standridge,
IFT Field Service Director

Prairie Crossing Council unanimously ratified provisions for a new contract that will remain in effect through the 2018-2019 school year. Some changes to language include updates to the evaluation system and professional advancement plan, a provision that reductions in force and involuntary reassignments will be conducted according to inverse seniority, and language that grants teachers tenure after three years of employment in the District. During the 2015-16 school year, members will receive a BRI (Base Rate Increase) of 3% and the Merit Award will have a minimum allotment of $45,000. In addition, members will see an increase in the monthly health insurance stipend, an increase in the monthly dental insurance stipend, and an increase in the stipend for chaperoning overnight trips. The contract calls for a salary reopener in the remaining three years.

On the Union’s bargaining team were Council President Michael “Chris” Hershiser, Vice-President Cynthia McGovern, Treasurer Melissa Plucinski, Christine Jeffery, Katy Barnett, and IFT Field Service Director Michelle Standridge.

Retiree News

by Carolyn Scaccia,
Retirees Council President

Welcome to another school year where those of us who are not going back can wave to the school buses as we have that extra cup of coffee and work on a crossword puzzle. But we do need to stay informed as to what is happening within our local and at the legislative level.

Please join us for lunch on September 10th at 11:00 a.m. at the Union Hall in the main room. We want to welcome all the 2015 retirees to our group and enjoy each others’ company. We will have a short program by a chiropractor and will also be asking for your ideas for other presentations you would be interested in attending.

On December 3rd, also at 11:00 at the Union Hall, we will be having our annual recipe exchange. It is a great place to sample foods and get some new ideas for your holiday entertaining. We’ve decided to call it A Taste of 504. You need to bring a dish to share and the recipe for it. You will leave that day with a cookbook and no need to eat lunch that day! Dishes in the past have ranged from savory to sweet, appetizer to entree.

Please mark your calendars for these events. Also make sure that Betty has your current address and email to keep you updated on any important announcements.

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with honest, accurate information, we must reach out to our own members and work to deliver the message as to why our Union is an essential and integral component of our profession. By speaking with and servicing even the disgruntled member, we will prevail through the “Dog Days” and emerge as a healthier and stronger Union.

In unity,

Mike McGue, President,
Lake County Federation of Teachers
by Kelly Regnier,  
504 Word Editor

Many adults don’t go any real length of time without checking the smart phone, tablet or computer for emails, updates, news feeds, photos, statuses and millions of “communications.” Our children are growing up in a world where computers fit into their tiny hands, conversation happens without a word spoken, and the world’s knowledge is at their fingertips. To say that, “technology has changed our lives” is an understatement. The development of “smart technology” has incited a change for humanity comparable perhaps only to the industrial revolution.

According to Google, there are “about 392,000,000” responses to a search for “teacher resources.” Looking for a poem to add to your unit? Google the subject matter and a dozen will probably pop up. Need a great bulletin board idea for your dinosaur unit? Check Pinterest. Wondering how to track your students’ behavior? Visit the App Store for help. Even the American Federation of Teachers has developed a website called Share My Lesson, filled with resources for teachers. Teachers can text students and parents safely using an app called “Remind.” Programs like Skyward have replaced our “paper” grade books, and Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Canvas make it possible to “grade papers” without having any actual paper. Without question, these are great advancements that teachers should take advantage of, and use to their fullest potential.

However, like with all exciting advancements, there is a downside to technology, and it can have some pretty serious ramifications for anyone in the education field. Social media has become a part of our everyday lives and a means of communication. Websites like Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and others allow teachers to share resources, news and ideas. These websites also allow us to connect with friends from all aspects of our lives. While this is wonderful when connecting with friends from high school or family that live far away, it creates a problem when students and their parents try to “connect” with you on these outlets.

The sad fact is, that as an education professional, you are held to a higher standard of conduct than average citizens, particularly when it comes to your social media. Realize that while you might feel that your information is “private,” nothing is truly private on social media. A screen shot of your Facebook post forwarded to your administrator by a friend of a friend is all it takes for you to face questions regarding your on-line presence. A
photo of you with your family at a Cubs game on a “sick day” on Instagram could do the same, with even more serious ramifications regarding the abuse of sick time. And while these situations are serious and may result in discipline, they are nothing compared to what can happen when education professionals connect with their current students using these kinds of technology.

It is very important that all employees in a school building understand that contact with current students via your personal cell phone (text, phone call, etc) or your social media accounts can lead to serious disciplinary action levied against them by district administration.

Education professionals need to take every step possible to protect themselves on-line. Know who you are connecting with on social media. Don’t use your personal cell phone to contact students or parents. And know that anything you post on-line may come back to haunt you.

Technology has certainly provided us with some fantastic life enhancements, both in and out of the school building. Knowing how to use those enhancements to your advantage is an important skill. Protect yourself online!
REGISTRATION FORM  
LCFT LOCAL 504 – 2015 FALL  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES

(Please Print Clearly)

NAME: ____________________________________  Home Phone: _____________________

Home Address: _______________________________________________________________

City: _________________________________________  State: _____  Zip: ______________

Personal E-mail: __________________________Your council (School District): ___________________

PLEASE SIGN UP EARLY TO HELP ENSURE THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF 10 FOR THE CLASS.
TAKE A LOOK AT TWO NEW CLASSES
Select courses you will attend.  All classes will be Tuesdays and Thursdays

ER&D CLASSES OFFERED

☐ SCHOOL, FAMILY & COMMUNITY
  September 15-October 15  4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

☐ BEGINNING READING INSTRUCTION
  October 20–November 19  4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

☐ ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (New 15 hour class)
  November 24-December 10  4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
  No Class November 26
  January 5 – January 19  4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

☐ MATHEMATICS (New 15 hour class)
  January 5 – January 19  4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

☐ MIDDLE SCHOOL MATHEMATICS
  January 26 – February 25  4:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

If you have an interest in a particular class, register as soon as possible.

Number of courses selected:  x Cost per course:  $50 = $ ____________

CHECKS AND REGISTRATION FORM MUST BE IN THE UNION HALL TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE START OF THE CLASS. PLEASE DON’T JEOPARDIZE THE CLASS BY REGISTERING LATE. ALL CLASSES ARE HELD IN THE UNION HALL.

Enclose check or money order (no cash) made payable to:  LCFT Local 504
Return form with non-refundable payment to:  Lake County Federation of Teachers, Local 504
  248 Ambrogio Drive
  Gurnee, IL  60031

(Please visit our website for class descriptions www.lcft.org)
ER&D Report

by Andrea Herbster, LCFT ER&D Coordinator

For three summers in a row, we have had many classes that have been successful and well attended allowing teachers to receive credits for lane movement and recertification. We are ever expanding our offerings by having new instructors trained to teach new classes. In the course of this year, there will be three new classes offered. They will be slightly different than the current ones. They will have fifteen class hours instead of thirty and, of course, earn only one hour of graduate credit and fifteen PDUs. The three classes are: English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Instructional Supports. Each class covers areas that are important in today’s teaching.

We are still trying to spread the word around LCFT about our classes and getting more districts to award in-district credits for salary advancement. I am planning on speaking to counsel representatives to see how together we may accomplish this.

If there are any questions regarding the above, please feel free to contact me through the LCFT Union Office or my personal email a.herbster@sbcglobal.net.

All photos from Summer 2015 ER&D classes at LCFT. Photos courtesy of LCFT Office.
Millburn Federation of Teachers Ratifies Three-Year Agreement

by Michelle Standridge, IFT Field Service Director

Following a membership meeting in mid-June, the Millburn Federation of Teachers ratified their second contract, this time a three-year agreement that will continue in effect through the 2017-2018 school year.

Highlights of Millburn’s contract include salary increases of 4% in the first year, 3% in the second year, and 80% of CPI with a floor of 2.5% and a ceiling of 3.5% in the third year. Extracurricular sponsors will also receive salary increases. Members will continue to be eligible to receive a retirement incentive after 10 years of service to the District which includes four years with a 6% increase each year and up to $300 per month toward insurance for 4 years following retirement. In addition, members will continue to receive full single insurance which includes medical, dental, prescription, and vision, with the board paying 50% of the difference between single coverage and family coverage for those who opt for a family insurance policy. Workday language was revised to provide greater flexibility for teachers, and the group added a professional courtesy and respect clause to the contract. Leave language was revised to increase the definition of the immediate family for the purpose of bereavement, and once personal leave is exhausted, members may use one sick leave day to attend the funeral of a person outside the immediate family, not to exceed three days per year. Some other items include an increase to internal substitute pay and the addition of language and pay for overloads and student supervision on overnight trips/events. Additionally, the Council is very pleased to have added fair share language to their contract. The negotiating team would like to send a special thank you to all of the MFT members who were so supportive and unified during the negotiating process!

On the Union’s bargaining team were Council President Carol McGill, Vice-President Judy Calhoun, Kevin Yost, Gretchen Polenzani, Christie Hutson, Suzanne DeKorsi, Carine Lancaster, and IFT Field Service Director Michelle Standridge.

Lake County Federation of Teachers
AFT Local #504
IFT-AFT/AFL-CIO

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The 504 Word is devoted to the interests of the Education Workers’ Union movement and is published five times each year by the Lake County Federation of Teachers.